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14. ABSTRACT

Military staff organizations at the operational level of command have been traditionally postured to address conventional problems in conventional environments with conventional approaches. However, as the world is increasingly influenced by the effects of globalization, joint and coalition staffs are more frequently tasked to address socially complex problems while simultaneously integrating diverse members into their organizations. As a result, operational leaders must develop and refine new problem solving approaches to tackle the non-conventional – that is, the ill-defined, interrelated systems of complex social problems that fall outside their normal realm of experience. Concurrently, leaders must cultivate awareness within themselves and among their staffs that sufficiently considers individuals' cultural dispositions to create an environment that continuously stimulates the production of diverse ideas and critical thinking. Through analysis of the nature of wicked problems and socially complex organizations, this paper describes the elements of opportunity driven problem solving and offers tools and methods for the operational planner to establish a multicultural environment conducive to productive conflict.

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The Necessity of a Good Fight:
A Multicultural Approach to Productive Conflict in Operational Level Staffs

by

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A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Joint Military Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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Abstract

Military staff organizations at the operational level of command have been traditionally postured to address conventional problems in conventional environments with conventional approaches. However, as the world is increasingly influenced by the effects of globalization, joint and coalition staffs are more frequently tasked to address socially complex problems while simultaneously integrating diverse members into their organizations. As a result, operational leaders must develop and refine new problem solving approaches to tackle the non-conventional – that is, the ill-defined, interrelated systems of complex social problems that fall outside their normal realm of experience. Concurrently, leaders must cultivate awareness within themselves and among their staffs that sufficiently considers individuals' cultural dispositions to create an environment that continuously stimulates the production of diverse ideas and critical thinking. Through analysis of the nature of wicked problems and socially complex organizations, this paper describes the elements of opportunity driven problem solving and offers tools and methods for the operational planner to establish a multicultural environment conducive to productive conflict.

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Globalization, Interconnectedness, and the Military Planner

> Both of us entered service to our country in the Cold War era, when strategic
> threats were more easily defined. Today, our "enemies" are often conditions –
> poverty, infectious disease, political instability and corruption, global warming –
> which generate the biggest threats. By addressing them in meaningful ways, we
> can forestall crises.
>
>   - General Anthony Zinni and Admiral Leighton Smith Jr.
>   "A Smarter Weapon," *USA Today,* 27 March 2008

The ascendancy of terms such as *globalization*, *integration*, and *synergy* in American

and international dialogue expresses an increasing emphasis on the interconnectedness of

people, economies, and ideas across the world. While greater political, economic, and

cultural interactions have created many opportunities, globalization has created (or

highlighted) equally significant challenges such as those described by General Zinni and

Admiral Smith. To a military staff, these politico-social or socio-cultural problems might

include the following:

- quelling insurgencies in multiethnic, multicultural areas;
- restoring governmental functions in failed states or at the end of hostilities; and
- building capacity among reluctant populaces in developing regions to prevent
  future conflict.

Hence, military planning efforts are shifting from addressing those issues more closely

associated with conventional operations to those that will address ill-defined, interrelated

systems of complex social problems like the ones listed above. In other words, "wicked

problems" are becoming a dominant focus of military problem solving.[1]

At the same time, the U.S. military is internalizing the concept of interconnectedness

as observed in the increased use of terms such as *joint*, *multinational*, and *interagency*.

Likewise, phrases in the latest National Defense and National Military Strategies (NDS,

NMS) such as "…working together with other elements of the U.S. Government, allies, and

partners (including indigenous actors)…" clearly indicate the Department of Defense (DoD) expectations that operational staffs will be comprised of diverse members of varying backgrounds.[2] Regrettably, whereas the function of joint and coalition staffs is to create unity of effort, it is more than likely that some of the members described in the NDS and NMS will represent diametrically opposing interests that directly challenge attempts to create a unity of effort. This condition (perhaps most notable in the current interagency clashes) is known as "social complexity."[3]

As a consequence, U.S.-led joint, combined, and interagency planning groups are expected to alleviate wicked problems in their theaters of operation while simultaneously managing their own social complexity. Moreover, the nature of wicked problems requires these groups to critically analyze and debate the merits of proposals offered by each participant in a productive manner in order to "satisfice" – that is, to obtain an *adequate* (vice optimal) resolution to the problem.[4] This enterprise of constructive debate sometimes referred to as *productive conflict* calls for an environment that not only respects but encourages diverse and critical thinking.[5] In short, our socio-political environment calls for a multicultural approach aimed at creating productive conflict within joint or coalition planning groups to stimulate critical thinking and effectively address the complex social problems the U.S. military is expected resolve.

The Nature of Complex Social Problems

In 1973, urban planners Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber coined the term "wicked problems" to describe the unique nature of challenges associated with social or policy planning. Rittel and Webber defined wicked problems as having the following characteristics:

- There is no definitive formulation of a wicked problem.
- Wicked problems have no stopping rule.
- Solutions to wicked problems are not true-or-false, but good-or-bad.
- There is no immediate and no ultimate test of a solution to a wicked problem.
- Every solution to a wicked problem is a "one-shot operation"; because there is no opportunity to learn by trial-and-error, every attempt counts significantly.
- Wicked problems do not have an enumerable (or an exhaustively describable) set of potential solutions, nor is there a well-described set of permissible operations that may be incorporated into the plan.
- Every wicked problem is essentially unique.
- Every wicked problem can be considered to be a symptom of another problem.
- The existence of a discrepancy representing a wicked problem can be explained in numerous ways. The choice of explanation determines the nature of the problem's resolution.
- The planner has no right to be wrong.[6]

These characteristics will likely sound familiar to the military planner because the United States has recently been employed more often in support of security and stability missions (e.g., Haiti, Somalia, GWOT) where complex social problems are typically more prevalent than in traditional, state-on-state, operations (e.g., WWII, Korea, OIF I). Unfortunately, U.S. armed forces have postured themselves towards fighting a conventional adversary in a conventional environment; but a new era has dawned that requires the military to tackle problems outside its historical realm of expertise.

Conventional Approaches to Problem Solving

The Boyd Cycle (*Figure 1*), more often known as the "observe-orient-decide-act" or

"OODA" Loop has probably been the most widely used

problem solving approach in the U.S. military for conventional

warfare.[7] This method consists of an iterative series of

discrete steps executed during decision making aimed towards

Figure 1: Boyd Cycle

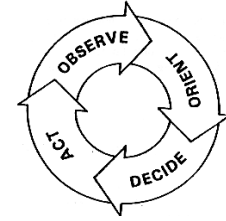gaining a temporal advantage over the adversary by executing

the steps ever faster with each cycle.

Since the Boyd Cycle has demonstrated utility in certain tactical scenarios, some

might argue that it is adequate for all situations. But unfortunately, this combat-proven

decision making approach has its shortcomings when applied to wicked problems. Assuming

the decision maker executes each step in its proper order, he will likely fall victim to two

characteristics of wicked problems: (1) that every attempt at resolution counts significantly

and (2) the planner has no right to be

wrong. The true algorithmic nature of the

Boyd Cycle becomes apparent when

viewed along an x-axis of progress

towards a solution and a y-axis of time, as

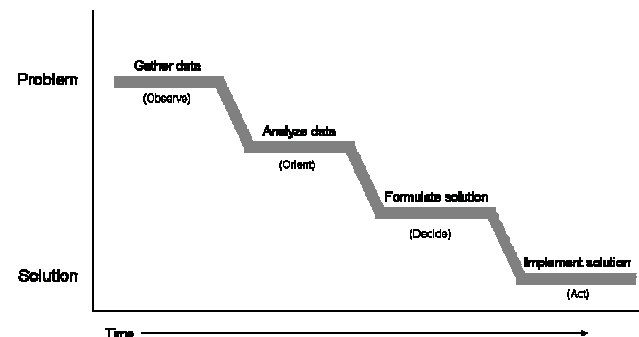seen in Figure 2.[8] Here, we see that the

Figure 2: Boyd Cycle over time

Boyd Cycle specifies a deliberate trial-and-error

approach to problems in a context where mistakes are not acceptable.

The Boyd Cycle's algorithmic method reflects a situation in which the problem is

well-defined, the process and tools to solve it are familiar, and the problem-solver knows

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what the solution will look like, such as constructing a bunker or attacking an enemy air

defense installation. Hence, the Boyd Cycle is well suited to solve what Rittel and Webber

called *tame problems*, but it is not an effective process for addressing the wicked problems

military planners face today.[9] Tame problems have the following characteristics:

- have a well-defined and stable problem statement;
- have a definite stopping point, (i.e., when the solution is reached);
- have a solution that can be objectively evaluated as right or wrong;
- belong to a class of similar problems that are all solved in a similar way;
- have solutions that can be easily tried and abandoned; and
- come with a limited set of alternative solutions.[10]

As General Zinni and Admiral Smith pointed out, military planners have traditionally

focused on more well-defined problems (movement of troops, fire support, sequencing

tactical operations) and as such, the Boyd Cycle has been a useful approach. But as the

requirement to address socially complex problems becomes a greater imperative for

operational staffs, planners must become more familiar with other, non-linear, problem

solving approaches.

A Non-Conventional Approach – Incorporating Opportunity-Driven Problem Solving

Research shows that when faced with a wicked problem, problem solvers eschewed an algorithmic approach in favor of an opportunity-driven method like the one depicted in Figure 3.[11] That is, rather than following a
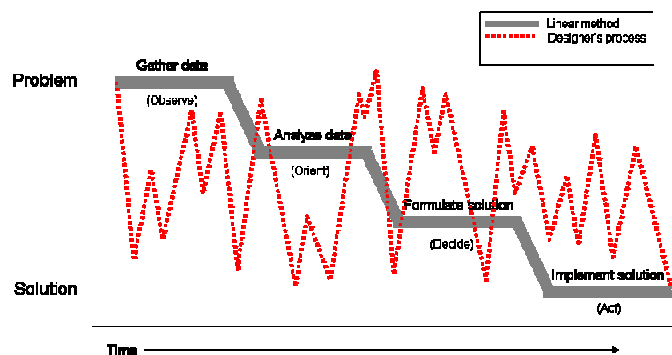

Figure 3: Opportunity-driven problem solving

predetermined sequence of steps from problem to solution, the planner/designer constantly

exploits opportunities to progress towards the solution, all the while gaining a deeper

understanding of the problem. In essence, the planner naturally works through the problem,

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taming and then solving those aspects of the problem where the risk of failure is low, and all the while continuing to learn about the problem, its potential solutions, and their potential second and third order effects.

Several approaches that incorporate opportunity-driven problem solving strategies required for resolving wicked problems have recently come to light and are worthy of further study. Most notably, researcher Dr. Jeffrey Conklin and the CogNexus Institute have developed the Dialogue Mapping method. This process applies the Issue-Based Information Systems (IBIS) approach developed by Werner Kunz and Horst Rittel in 1970.[12] IBIS is an effort to create productive conflict that organizes problem identification and solving around a language of "topics, issues, questions of fact, positions, arguments, and model problems."[13]

The Dialogue Mapping process operationalizes the IBIS construct with a facilitator who utilizes special enterprise software to capture and display contributions to the problem identification and problem solving discussions as they are made, using the IBIS grammar and a shared hypertext display (Figure 4). [14]

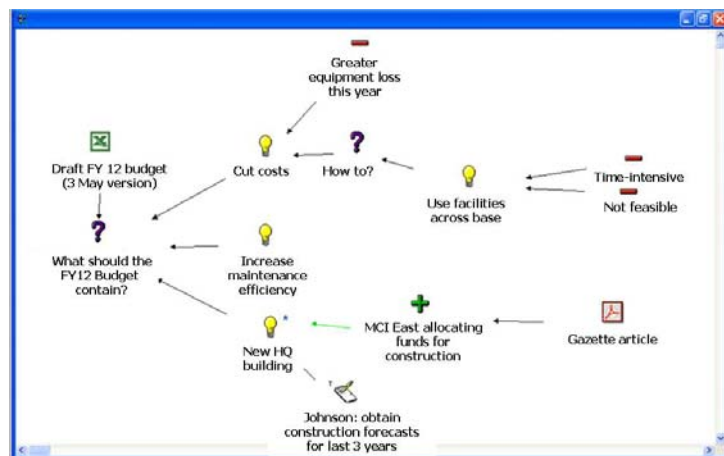Figure 4: Sample Dialogue Map[14]

According to its developers, the use of a shared language and a common visual representation of the planning session are intended to facilitate collaboration. More specifically, collaboration is established through the following actions:

- acknowledging each participant's contribution;
- visually depicting the interrelationship between different inputs to the conversation;

- keeping the discussion on topic by maintaining a history of the dialogue and summarizing the rationale behind decisions; and
- using the shared display to build ownership in the map and commitment to "craft the clearest and most compelling map of [the group's] collective thinking." [15]

The specific technology and training requirements of Dialogue Mapping would likely prove too costly for use throughout the Department of Defense. However, the principles of a common language for problem identification and resolution and a shared visual depiction of the ongoing conversation are definitely worth replicating.

In a related approach, former Marine Officer, John Schmitt has proposed a model adapted from Peter Checkland's systems thinking approach that is less technology-centric than the Dialogue Mapping method but is probably more cost effective and has already been used, to some degree, by the First Marine Division to counter the insurgency in Fallujah. [16]

As Figure 5 illustrates, the designers built an impression of the social mess, including its environment (disruptive behavior, popular grievances, drought, the fictitious neighboring country of Vicinia). The relationships between each element are

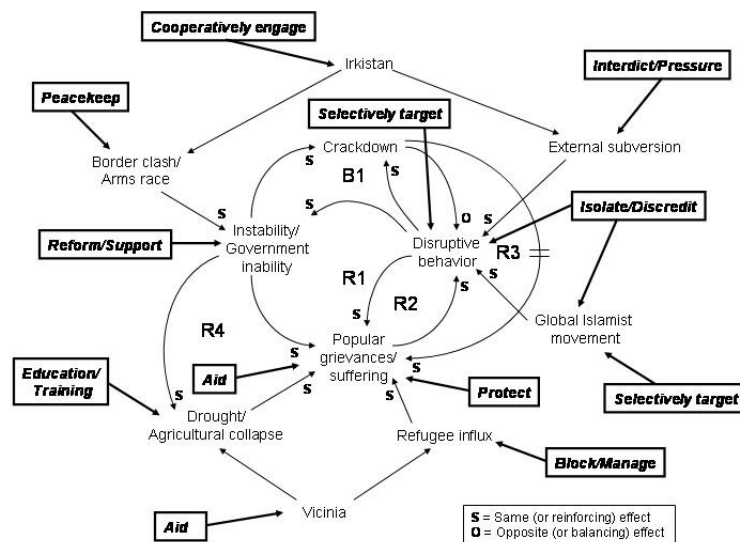Figure 5: Sample Systemic Design[17]

represented by reinforcing loops (R1) or balancing loops (B1), to include reinforcing loops that appear over time (R3 =). These loops help the designers synthesize their observations in order to formulate the problem(s) and develop a conceptual model. As the designers build familiarity with the system, they intuitively begin to identify possible interventions (aid

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Vicinia, selectively target disruptive behavior) that can later be translated into actions. The designers then identify methods and indicators that will validate or invalidate their design, and then finally transition the design into operational plans.[17]

Schmitt noted that Major General James Mattis and the First Marine Division applied the principles of this Systemic Design approach to tackling the insurgency in Fallujah, Iraq in 2004. Determining the system as the population of Western Iraq, the Marines identified problem elements such as former regime members, unemployment, and the population's ambivalence towards the situation. As the planners began to familiarize themselves with the problem, interventions were developed, such as neutralizing the bad actors, creating jobs, and developing an omnipresent information operations campaign. Though Schmitt does not specifically address the efficacy of the First Marine Division's use of an adapted Systemic Design approach, the mere fact that this concept has been applied in combat operations demonstrates its potential.

Regardless of which model an operational staff applies to resolving a wicked problem, two central components appear to be (1) a shared medium through which all group members can visualize their positions relative to a satisficed resolution and (2) "an argumentative process in the course of which an image of the problem and of the solution emerges gradually among the participants, as a product of incessant judgment, subjected to critical argument."[18] As seen here, resolving wicked problems requires collaborative tools and productive conflict.

Unfortunately, scientific theories (Social Identity Theory and Realistic Conflict Theory) and anecdotal evidence highlight the significant challenges of creating productive conflict among relatively homogenous groups, let alone among the heterogeneous

membership of a joint or coalition planning group.[19] Therefore it is reasonable to conclude

that, if ignored, the social complexity associated with operational staffs will significantly

undermine the staff's ability to effect productive conflict.

Social Complexity among Joint and Coalition Staffs

Cultural influences permeate all aspects of human interaction. As such, addressing

culture must be a significant consideration among joint and coalition staffs that are inherently

socially complex. Organizational behaviorists Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer noted:

> People need some sense that they understand how the world works in order to
> behave relatively confidently and consistently within it (Apter 1964). By
> providing this sense of understanding, cultures help to motivate people to
> continue to exert effort in socially acceptable behaviors toward collectively
> defined ends....To make cultures concrete and keep them vital, members of
> cultures repeatedly communicate and affirm their shared understandings
> through cultural forms like myths, symbols, rites (Trice and Beyer 1984), and
> rewards (Kerr and Slocum 1987).[20]

Trice and Beyer's description is especially relevant for two reasons. First, it provides a

starting point to understand other cultures by seeking out cultural indicators (myths, symbols,

rites, and rewards) to gain a sense of an individual's or group's core value system. Second, it

identifies areas where the operational leader/staff member can influence culture within the

organization (unit patches, battle rhythms, and awards ceremonies, to name a few).

Managing Social Complexity - Multicultural Understanding

In 1980, Geert Hofstede developed (and continues to update) a widely-used cross-

cultural values paradigm to aid in cultural understanding. Based initially on questionnaire

responses from over 117,000 IBM employees across over 50 countries (which later included

an additional assessment within 23 countries with significant Buddhist-Shinto cultures),

Hofstede was able to distill from his findings five central cultural value dimensions:

- **Power Distance Index (PDI)**: acceptance/expectation, defined more by the
  followers than the leaders, that power will be distributed unequally. High

PDI indicates "vertical" organizations and large status and salary gaps between workers and management.

- **Individualism (IDV):** degree of individuals' integration into groups and related expectations of interdependence and loyalty. High IDV indicates loose ties between individuals and significant independence.
- **Masculinity (MAS):** not simply the distribution of roles between the genders but the variance between very assertive and competitive to modest and caring. High MAS indicates significant gender gaps and high levels of assertiveness and competition.
- **Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI):** tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, which includes willingness to accept differing opinions. High UAI indicates high risk aversion, strict rules and laws, and a reluctance to change.
- **Long-Term Orientation (LTO):** added after the initial study. Deals with 'Virtue regardless of Truth', such as the primacy of thrift and perseverance versus short term concerns such as respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. High LTO indicates an inclination to overcome obstacles over time versus by will or force.[21]

Though far from perfect and susceptible to generalizations, these indicators can provide a critical means for initial cultural assessment and understanding when used as a comparative tool. For instance, as Figure 6 points out, one might predict significant challenges to cooperation within a planning group composed of Iraqis who expect a hierarchal disequilibrium and South Koreans who urge patience that are led by Americans with "get-it done ASAP" orientation and a belief that credit should be individually accorded.[22]
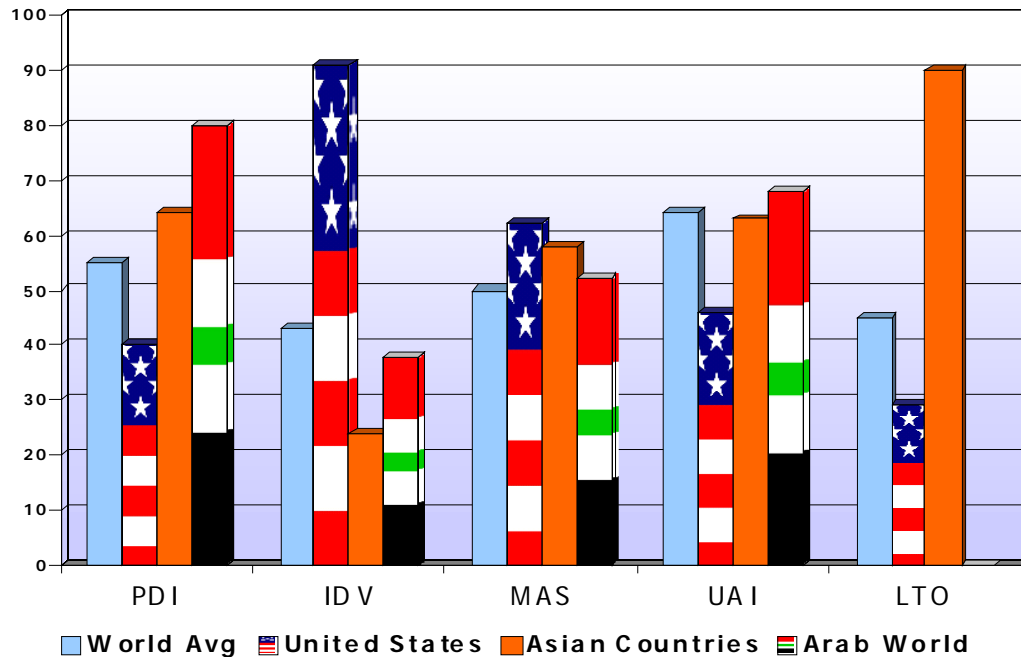
Figure 1: Sample of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions[21]*

Furthermore, research into interservice cultures, military self-identity, and civil-military perspectives can lead to constructing a similar paradigm using Hofstede's cultural values dimensions to predict civilian-military interactions such as within the interagency. A simple anecdotal review of data from studies done by the RAND Corporation,[23] Carl Builder,[24] Joyce DiMarco,[25] and Ole Holsti[26] might lead one to deduce the following:

- the American military shows relatively high power distance, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance levels;
- its civilian counterparts exhibit higher individualism levels; and
- both groups share relatively low levels of long-term orientation.

Regardless of the accuracy of these conclusions, the mere exercise demonstrates the utility of Hofstede's model towards cultural understanding to improve the potential for productive conflict in joint and coalition staffs.

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* Note: "Asian Countries": includes China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand; "Arab World" includes Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Managing Social Complexity – Perspective and Resources

As General Zinni and Admiral Smith further observed, military problems in the past have been more easily defined, and one might argue that military staffs were similarly less complex.[27] Hence, problem solving approaches developed during this time, such as the Boyd Cycle, reflected the culture of quick, linear thinking and decision making characteristic of more homogenous staffs who were addressing more clearly defined problems.[28] But in a coalition environment, quick decisions and suppositions based only on familiar information (one's cultural value set) have the potential for becoming prejudices and stereotypes that can inhibit effective team building, planning, and mission success. For these reasons, a multicultural approach to any situation, particularly interactions among operational staffs and efforts to address wicked problems, begins with a commitment to consider ideas as hypotheses first and only thus until they are proven to be fact.

Tools such as Hofstede's five cultural value dimensions provide a starting point to mitigate the hazards of hasty decisions that are a necessity in time-sensitive combat operations but may be a detriment in more culturally sensitive security cooperation efforts. Furthermore, these tools should be augmented with principles to build cultural understanding and aimed to increase the benefits of diversity. To this end, occupational psychologist Michele Deeks offered the following guidelines for personal behavior when she wrote the following:

- **If you are unsure, check it out** – Generally people welcome the opportunity to share their culture. Asking questions early on can save awkwardness later.
- **Equal treatment** – It's not enough to treat everyone the same, you should aim to treat people as individuals and as they would want to be treated (not necessarily the same as the way you would want to be treated).
- **Don't worry if you make a mistake** – It's impossible to remember all of the differences in customs and cultures; the important point is that you make the effort to build better relationships with [your colleagues].

- **Build on people's strengths** – The benefit of any team is that everyone will have different strengths and experiences; the diversity of these experiences is likely to be even greater in an international team. Take time to get to know all team members' strengths and make the most of them.
- **Share information** – Building relationships is a two-way process…try to be open about sharing information about your own culture so that they can get a better understanding of your background…Be open to questions people may ask of you – but also let people know if you are uncomfortable with the questions they are putting to you (even if done through a third party).
- **Avoid making instant judgements** – We tend to make immediate evaluations based on our own culture, rather than trying to comprehend thoughts and feelings from the other person's point of view; we assume our own culture or way of life is the most natural. Try to see the project from the other person's point of view before you judge their performance or contribution.[29]

Another helpful approach to gaining cultural understanding, particularly regarding the expectations of how an operational staff should operate, is through the use of metaphors. Professors Cristina Gibson and Mary Zellmer-Bruhn found that individuals in different nations and organizations used the following team metaphors in similar ways to describe their expectations for how their organizations should operate:

- **Family**: clear parent-child type roles, less individualism
- **Community**: less hierarchy, but less voluntary membership
- **Associates**: more autonomy, empowerment, and voluntary membership
- **Sports**: fairly clear competitive roles for a specific task and voluntary membership
- **Military**: strong objective-based orientation, tighter control, less voluntary membership[30]

Many of the findings above reinforce Hofstede's thesis that cross-cultural values exist and offer further insight into the significance of understanding members' expectations for how the organization should operate. These culture-revealing metaphorical clues might be used by an operational planning team leader to reorganize his team or assign tasks differently, if, for example, he were to determine that the host nation officers define teamwork using family metaphors whereas the multinational officers picture the organization as a sports team.

The above example not only demonstrates the challenges (and some solutions) but also illustrate the necessity for multicultural awareness among the members of joint and coalition planning groups. Without some common understanding, productive conflict – a key component in the process of resolving wicked problems – cannot happen. If people do not feel comfortable offering original and potentially contentious ideas or critically analyzing the contributions of other team members, opportunity-driven design cannot occur and the problem's wickedness only compounds.

Creating Productive Conflict

With the backdrop of multicultural awareness as a countermeasure to at least some of the challenges of social complexity, we return to Rittel's and Webber's proposed method to resolving wicked problems: an argumentative process that stimulates critical thinking from which the solution gradually emerges.[31] This concept of productive conflict integrates the multicultural approach in that it shares many of the same principles described above, such as personal and cultural awareness, information-sharing, and critical thought.

With the foregoing in mind, Professors Kathleen Eisenhardt and L. J. Bourgeois III, and management consultant Jean Kahwajy have succinctly captured the steps comprising productive conflict to mitigate wicked problems. Based on a ten-year study of twelve top-management teams in technology-based companies, this group identified six factors of productive conflict that are relevant to joint and coalition planning groups:

- Focus on the facts.
- Multiply the alternatives.
- Create common goals.
- Seek consensus with qualification.
- Balance the power structure.
- Use humor.[32]

These factors, nested within a multicultural framework, provide the blueprint for joint and coalition staffs to stimulate critical thinking in order to effectively confront the complex social problems the U.S. military is increasingly expected to face. We will consider these factors in greater detail below.

      "Work with more, rather than less information and debate on the basis of facts." [33] Eisenhart's research showed that more rather than less information led members to focus on issues versus biases or opinions. In the absence of good information, members tend to rely on hunches and guesses, which often leads to personality-based discussion and, ultimately, *destructive* interpersonal conflict. Since operational staffs must operate in volatile and uncertain environments, the ability to obtain more information may not always be possible, but maintaining the underlying principle – to consistently debate in terms of a facts-based rationale – is paramount for productive conflict. Conklin's Dialogue Mapping technology and Schmitt's suggested use of simple collaboration tools (e.g., white boards) offer ways to organize the information in a coherent manner to facilitate facts-based debate. [34]

      "Develop multiple alternatives to enrich the level of debate." [35] This includes introducing unsupported options simply to promote debate. Researchers determined that developing multiple alternatives diffuses destructive conflict by (1) enabling a greater number of participants to be heard; (2) offering individuals more room to vary the degree of their support over a range of choices and to more easily shift positions without losing face; and (3) increasing the likelihood of obtaining solutions that simultaneously address multiple facets of the problem. Furthermore, it was noted that leaders should not stop at obvious solutions. Instead, as time permits, they should continue generating further options that

might be more effective at resolving the problem or to address likely second and third order effects associated with the problem's resolution.

"Share commonly agreed-upon goals."[36] The researchers found that successful teams consistently supported the position that it was in everyone's interest to achieve the best possible solution for all involved. This concept also relates to the broader multicultural goal of creating common understanding among the staff members, and might challenge leaders to balance the competitive cultural natures of some team members with the group's overarching need to collaborate. That being said, there are times when a competitive approach is useful, such as when debating potential courses of action. However, despite this use, the underlying principle of collaboration must always be foremost and reinforced by the leadership.

"Resolve issues without forcing consensus."[37] The researchers found that the ideal method to resolve issues is through consensus. However, if consensus cannot be achieved, effective teams would then look to the relevant senior member to make the decision, guided by input from the rest of the group. This approach meets people's desire to be heard while giving leaders added influence when the decision affects their part of the organization. Additionally, this method offers a decision making process that clearly delineates how the decision will be made, thus facilitating timely decisions – an often critical requirement among operational level staffs.

"Maintain a balanced power structure."[38] The researchers found that interpersonal conflict was lowest in organizations where the leader was more powerful than the other members of the group *and* where the members wield substantial power, especially in their own well-defined areas of responsibility. It was also emphasized that the degree to which a group might flatten its organization would vary from staff to staff, depending on the cultural

makeup of the group. Leaders must apply their understanding of the organization's cultural values and expectations when applying this power balance factor.

"Inject humor into the decision process."[39] Finally, the researchers noted that humor is an excellent means to relieve the tension associated with making significant decisions while also maintaining collaborative versus competitive conflict by sustaining positive moods. Furthermore, these researchers observed that positive moods tend to reduce defensive barriers, increasing people's willingness consider others' arguments. Here, they also warned that special care must be taken to apply cultural understanding in such situations, as a misperceived attempt at humor can have an opposite effect on creating productive conflict.

Conflict in Resolving Complex Social Problems

> Differences of opinion, priorities and viewpoints will always be part of the world of government. Managers must create cultures that transform destructive conflict into constructive contention. When people harness the energy and passion from these differences, then they will be able to generate innovation, commitment and accountability.[40]

> - Ron D'Andrea, "Harnessing Conflict,"
> *Government Executive*, 15 April 2005

As management consultant Ron D'Andrea asserted, negative conflict is caused not by subject matter, but by behavior. When properly managed, conflict can become a valuable tool for solving problems. Even in the times when military problems might have been more well-defined, productive conflict created highly effective plans and operations (e.g., Eisenhower's multinational staff during Operation OVERLORD). Today, productive conflict is an even greater requirement to address the complex social problems the U.S. military faces. It follows that today's leaders must be willing to engage in shaping behavior to support a multicultural approach towards the application of productive conflict.

Supporting this perspective, Lieutenant General John Cushman, U.S. Army (Retired), contemporized the lessons of over thirty years of conflict in the concluding remarks of his analysis of "The Military Effectiveness Project" (conducted by the Defense Department's Office of Net Assessment in 1984).[41] LTG Cushman advised,

> Let insight evolve from an atmosphere of open, shared thought…from a willing openness to a variety of stimuli, from intellectual curiosity, from observation and reflection, from continuous evaluation and discussions, from review of assumptions, from listening to the views of outsiders, from study of history, and from the indispensible ingredient of humility… The reflective, testing, and tentative manner in which insight is sought does not mean indecisiveness. It simply raises the likelihood that the decided course of action will be successful because it is in harmony with the real situation that exists. [42]

Written in 1988, during the military's early transition towards a more joint force, LTG Cushman's remarks may be considered prescient today. The global socio-political and socio-cultural environment calls for the military to undergo a significant transformation governed by critical elements such as cultural understanding, critical thought, and collaboration.

Fortunately, there are signs that the military is becoming what Colonel John Nagl and others call a "learning organization" – one that can learn quickly and adapt in the middle of conflict. This change is evident at the service level where the U.S. Army and Marine Corps have reorganized non-infantry units for counterinsurgency roles and redoubled their efforts to recognize and adapt to cultural nuances in Iraq and Afghanistan.[43] On a broader scale, the establishment of the Commander's Emergency Response Program and increased use of local forces demonstrate that the United States is beginning to appreciate the utility of constant assessment and adaptation. [44] And towards a more enduring mindset, the National Defense University is developing curricula that integrate cultural awareness and creative thinking into the core competencies of a future "National Security Professional."[45] The need for these

adaptive capabilities will only increase in the future as information flow and the diffusion of technology stimulate a climate of worldwide interaction on a scale never seen before. [46]

The byproduct of globalization is the increased potential for an influx of complex social problems as people and groups in all corners of the world become better connected, better informed, and more enabled to independently pursue their self-interests. It is worth noting that armed conflict between nations is decreasing while conflict among groups within nations is increasing. [47] To this, Colonel Nagl opined, "The American army, so successful in waging and winning wars against other states, must adapt to increase its ability to moderate wars within states." [48] That is, the Army, and the American military at large, must be better postured to tackle complex social messes while mitigating their own social complexity. Such a posture calls for a multicultural approach aimed at creating productive conflict to stimulate critical thinking so as to effectively address the complex social problems the military will face in the future.

NOTES

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[2] U.S. Department of Defense, 2005 National Defense Strategy, 18.

[3] Jeffrey Conklin, *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems* (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley and Sons Ltd., 2006), 3.

[4] "Satisficing", http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Satisficing (accessed 28 March 2008).

[5] L. David Brown, *Managing Conflict at Organizational Interfaces* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co. Inc., 1983), 40-43.

[6] Rittel and Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning."

[7] Adapted from COL John R. Boyd, USAF, *A Discourse on Winning and Losing* (Maxwell Air Force Base, AL.: Air University Press: 1987).

[8] Adapted from Conklin, *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*.

[9] Rittel, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning."

[10] Ibid.

[11] Adapted from Conklin, *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*, 5.

[12] CogNexus Institute, "Issue Mapping", http://www.cognexus.org/issue_mapping.htm (accessed 15 March 2008).

[13] Werner Kunz and Horst Rittel, "Issues As Elements of Information Systems," Working Paper 131, July 1970, http://www-iurd.ced.berkeley.edu/pub/WP-131.pdf.

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[15] Ibid."

[16] John F. Schmitt, "A Systemic Concept for Operational Design," Unpublished monograph. U.S. Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory, 2006. http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil/concepts/home.cfm/ (accessed 1 March 2008).

[17] Reprinted from John F. Schmitt, "A Systemic Concept for Operational Design," 36-42.

[18] Rittel, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning."

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[20] Ibid, 3.

[21] Adapted from Geert Hofstede , "Cultural Dimensions", http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php

[22] Ibid.

[23] Thomas S. Szayna, et. al. "The Civil-Military Gap in the United States: Does It Exist, Why, and Does It Matter?" (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2007)

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[25] LTC Joyce DiMarco, USA. "Service Culture Effects on Joint Operations: The Masks of War Unveiled." Unpublished monograph. US Army School for Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, KS, May 2004.

[26] Ole R. Holsti, "Identity of the U.S. Military: Comments on 'An N of 1'." *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 2, No. 3. (Sept 2004).

[27] Zinni and Smith, "A Smarter Weapon."

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[34] Schmitt, "A Systemic Concept for Operational Design," 32.

[35] Eisenhardt, "How Management Teams Can Have a Good Fight," 3.

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[37] Ibid, 6.

[38] Ibid, 5.

[39] Ibid, 4.

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[42] Ibid, 30-35.

[43] COL John A. Nagl, USA, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), xii-xiii.

[44] Ibid, xiii-xiv.

[45] Lee Blank, "Interagency Collaboration: 'A Work In Progress – Pain & Pathos,'" PowerPoint, 8 April 2008, Newport, RI: Naval War College, JMO Department.

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[48] Ibid.

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